

Wisconsin Fur Buyers Report

2002-03

By Brian Dhuey

Abstract

The average price paid for furbearer pelts rose for 8 of the 13 species on the 2002-03 fur buyer survey. The total pelt value for 2002-03 total pelt value was estimated at 1.6 million dollars, a decrease of \$220,000 over the 2001-02 value. Over 215,000 furs were purchased from Wisconsin fur harvesters this season. Thirty-seven percent of all furs purchased were from out of state.

Methods

In order to document harvest totals, interstate fur sales, and total pelt value of the 2002-03 furbearer harvest season, survey forms were mailed to all licensed Wisconsin fur buyers. Fur buyers were asked to report the number of furs purchased from Wisconsin hunters, trappers, other fur dealers, and the number purchased from outside the state. Fur buyers were also questioned on the average prices paid to Wisconsin fur harvesters for furbearer pelts. Lastly, fur buyers were asked to estimate the percentage of furs purchased from Wisconsin fur hunters. A second and third mailing were sent to all non-respondents. Data from all returned questionnaires were entered into the DNR UNIX computer and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

Results

Responses were received from 70 of the 75 (93%) licensed fur buyers that were surveyed. Since some of the returned surveys covered more than one buyer the corrected response rate was 100% (75 of 75). Sixty-three percent of the respondents purchased furs during the 2002-03 season.

Of the 405,214 furs purchased by licensed Wisconsin fur buyers during the 2002-03 season, 53% were purchased from Wisconsin fur harvesters, 9% were purchased from Wisconsin dealers, and 37% were purchased from outside Wisconsin (Table 1).

The 215,232 furs purchased from licensed Wisconsin hunters and trappers yielded a total pelt value of \$1,579,435. This season's total pelt value was slightly lower than the 2001-02 season total of 1,803,108. This is the second year in a row where both the number of furs purchased from hunter/trappers and the total pelt value have declined.

The mean price paid to Wisconsin hunters/trappers in 2002-03 increased for 8 of the 13 species surveyed. The lowest price paid for a furbearer pelt in the 2002-03 season was \$1.00 (opossum and weasel). The highest price paid for a furbearer pelt in the 2002-03 season was \$94.00 (otter). The mean percentage of coyote, gray fox, raccoon, and red fox pelts purchase that were taken via hunting during the 2002-03 season is 68%, 25%, 71%, and 41%, respectively.

Table 1. *Fur harvest data as reported by licensed Wisconsin fur buyers, 2002-03 trapping season.*

| Species | # Purchased from Wisconsin Fur Harvesters | Average Price (\$) | Low Price (\$) | High Price (\$) | # Purchased from Wisconsin Dealers | # Purchased from Outside Wisconsin | Total Pelt Value (\$) |
|--------------|---|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--|--|--------------------------|
| Muskrat | 100,925 | \$2.63 | \$1.20 | \$3.14 | 18028 | 46689 | \$265,432.75 |
| Raccoon | 78,398 | \$9.93 | \$6.00 | \$20.00 | 15100 | 64097 | \$778,492.14 |
| Mink | 5,696 | \$8.79 | \$4.00 | \$15.00 | 1075 | 9646 | \$50,067.84 |
| Red Fox | 2,138 | \$22.17 | \$10.50 | \$30.83 | 1211 | 3954 | \$47,399.46 |
| Beaver | 19,606 | \$12.67 | \$5.26 | \$21.66 | 1111 | 12064 | \$248,408.02 |
| Gray Fox | 420 | \$11.25 | \$4.50 | \$18.00 | 97 | 399 | \$4,725.00 |
| Otter | 1,515 | \$77.12 | \$15.00 | \$94.00 | 115 | 799 | \$116,836.80 |
| Coyote | 2,205 | \$15.33 | \$5.00 | \$34.49 | 796 | 8856 | \$33,802.65 |
| Bobcat | 64 | \$46.31 | \$35.00 | \$80.00 | 0 | 114 | \$2,963.84 |
| Fisher | 1,047 | \$23.89 | \$14.00 | \$31.88 | 192 | 645 | \$25,012.83 |
| Opossum | 2,237 | \$1.40 | \$1.00 | \$3.00 | 178 | 3468 | \$3,131.80 |
| Skunk | 409 | \$5.10 | \$2.25 | \$11.00 | 178 | 989 | \$2,085.90 |
| Weasel | 572 | \$2.28 | \$1.00 | \$3.00 | 121 | 60 | \$1,304.16 |
| Total | 215,232 | | | | 38,202 | 151,780 | \$1,579,663.19 |

WISCONSIN FUR TRAPPER SURVEY

s. 23.09(2)(k), Wis. Stats.
Form 2300-103 (R 3/03)

Dear Wisconsin Furbearer Trapper:

You have been selected to help gather information on fur trapping. Completion of this survey is voluntary. You can make an important contribution to the future of Wisconsin's fur harvests and trapping activity by taking the time to complete the attached survey. If you did not trap furbearers, simply answer questions #1 and #6 and return the survey. If you did trap, please fill out Part I of the survey. If you trapped beaver, please also complete Part II of the survey.

The information requested from you and other trappers is essential in managing Wisconsin's valuable fur resource. Through your cooperation we can determine catch, trapping success, trapping pressure, and trapper characteristics on a statewide basis. These facts are necessary for a better understanding of how regulations affect your trapping and the welfare of furbearer populations. With your help, the future of regulated trapping as a public service will be assured as we face challenges locally and globally.

Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey. Reverse the flap on the survey, tape the edge and mail. Using your stamp will save funds for management even though no postage is required to return the survey. *Please reply even if you did not trap this season or were not successful.*

Thank you.

Sincerely,

John F. Olson
Furbearer Ecologist

| PART I. | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Did you trap for furbearers in Wisconsin during this season? <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> (2) No | | | 2. In what DNR REGION did you do MOST of your trapping? <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Northern <input type="checkbox"/> (4) Southeast <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Northeast <input type="checkbox"/> (5) South Central <input type="checkbox"/> (3) West Central | | |
| 3. About how many days did you trap? _____ days trapped | | | | | |
| 4. Please fill in all five blanks for each kind of furbearer you trapped in Wisconsin during the past season: | | | | | |
| | Number caught in traps | Average Number of Sets | Total Days Trapped | Number SOLD in Wisconsin | Number SOLD Out of State |
| Otter | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Muskrat | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Mink | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Raccoon | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Red Fox | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Gray Fox | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Coyote | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Bobcat | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Fisher | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Skunk* | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Opossum* | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Weasel | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| *If either skunks or opossums were caught incidentally, then put zeros for average number of sets and total days trapped. | | | | | |
| 5. Estimate your total trapping expenses for the past season: (traps, lures, gas, license, etc.) \$ _____ | | | 6. Did you also HUNT furbearers with gun and/or dogs during the past season? <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> (2) No If yes, please give the number of each kind taken: _____ Red Fox _____ Gray Fox _____ Coyote _____ Raccoon | | |
| 7. Of the coyotes and foxes that you killed, how many had mange? _____ Red Fox _____ Gray Fox _____ Coyote | | | | | |
| 8. Of conbair traps used, what percent were used as: _____ % water sets _____ % dry land sets | | | 9. Of dry land conbair sets made, what percent were blind sets, natural cubbies, and/or artificial cubbies? _____ % blind sets _____ % natural cubbies _____ % artificial cubbies | | |
| 10. In an effort to develop more humane trapping systems, it may be necessary for trappers to consider some technique changes. Please check all that you would consider reasonable: | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Change set location and set-up <input type="checkbox"/> (4) Purchase new, more humane traps if modifications can't be done <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Modify current traps <input type="checkbox"/> (3) Discontinue use of less desirable traps <input type="checkbox"/> (5) None of the above | | | | | |

Figure 1. The 2002-03 furtrapper questionnaire.